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COMMISSIONERS SPEAKING AS AN AMBASSADOR OF SERVENEBRASKA – GENERAL TALKING POINTS

A primary role of Commissioners is to serve as ambassadors for ServeNebraska, broadening the understanding of the good work done in our state. In spreading the benefits of community service, Commissioners can help increase civic engagement and broaden the scope of potential partnerships. The information below is provided to assist you with sharing highlights of the Commission's work. Additional details are available through a number of printed and online resources – including the ServeNebraska website, www.serve.nebraska.gov

Mission

All ServeNebraska effort is undertaken in support of our MISSION: Mobilizing Nebraskans to strengthen their communities through collaboration, volunteering, and national service programming.

In fulfilling this mission, the Commission develops and implements community-based programming. Direction is provided by a diverse roster of governor-appointed Commissioners with management provided by a small dedicated staff.

Current operating programs include:

- AmeriCorps
- Disability Inclusion (Accommodations, Training & Preparedness)
- Awards & Volunteer Recognition
- Professional Development and Technical Assistance

AmeriCorps

ServeNebraska is probably best known for its role in administering AmeriCorps within Nebraska. In administering AmeriCorps, ServeNebraska subgrants federal funds allocated by the Corporation for National and Community Service to local organizations and agencies committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, veterans and military families, health, disaster response and the environment.

Each of these organizations and agencies, in turn, uses their AmeriCorps funding to recruit, place, and supervise AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members are individuals committed to bettering their communities. To be an AmeriCorps member, an individual must be at least 17, be an US citizen or a lawful permanent resident alien, and possess a high school diploma or GED or agree to pursue one during his/her term of service. Individual AmeriCorps may have additional requirements.

Through their service, and the volunteers they mobilize, AmeriCorps members in Nebraska to address critical needs in communities, including:

- Mentoring disadvantaged youth
- Fighting illiteracy
- Engaging New Americans in the economic fabric of the state
- Increasing opportunities for those with disabilities
- Increasing volunteerism
- Assisting those on probation to gain skills, secure employment, and become viable contributors to society

After successful completion of their term of service, AmeriCorps members earn an AmeriCorps Education Award that can be used to pay for college or graduate school, or to repay qualified student loans. Most AmeriCorps members also receive a modest living allowance. Full-time members are eligible for health care benefits and child care reimbursement.

In the last five years, ServeNebraska's AmeriCorps programs have grown from 99 members to more than 300 members growing from 5 programs to 13-14 programs with members serving all over the state in rural and urban areas.

Disability Inclusion

ServeNebraska is dedicated to helping people with disabilities reach their potential for community involvement through education, training, outreach, and creating inclusive service environments. An increasing number of individuals with disability have engaged in service as AmeriCorps members each of the past few years. The Disability preparedness initiative promotes collaborative efforts in communities throughout Nebraska, sharing knowledge, resources and guidance related to disability for persons with disabilities.

Awards & Volunteer Recognition

Major national studies conducted by the Corporation for National & Community Service in each of the last three years highlight that Nebraskans volunteer more than residents of any other state, except one. To celebrate the outstanding volunteer spirit evident in Nebraska, the Commission sponsors the following awards:

- ➔ Governor's Points of Light Award (presented quarterly)
- ➔ First Lady's Community Service Awards (presented annually)

Details and nomination instructions for these awards can be found online at www.serve.nebraska.gov.